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AUTHOR Munoz, Marco A.

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ABSTRACT

Kentucky's Jefferson County Public Schools evaluated their Positive Outreach Program (POP), which was designed to help elementary students with emotional, behavioral, or social problems overcome their problems and succeed in school. POP focuses on creating and enhancing positive skills, relationships, and environmental contexts. It includes school, home, and community-based interventions, services, and supports. Most participating students, who were referred by their principals, were male, black, and poor. The evaluation examined student characteristics, differences in students' non-academic measures, and changes in students' behavior following participation in POP. Data on attendance and discipline and teacher reports were collected at the beginning, during, and end of the program. Over 180 students were referred to POP. The program helped elementary schools help their students overcome behavioral, emotional, and social problems in order to succeed. Participating students' attendance rates increased, and teacher-based behavior ratings decreased positively and significantly. Four appendixes include the teacher-based behavior rating checklist, permission form, student information form, and student success plan. (Contains 13 references.) (SM)



RUNNING HEAD: Supporting At-Risk Elementary Students

Supporting At-Risk Elementary Students: The Impact of the Positive Outreach Program

Marco A. Munoz

Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS)

VanHoose Education Center

Accountability, Research, and Planning

3332 Newburg Road

Louisville, KY 40218

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Positive Outreach Program (POP)

Program Evaluation

Background Information

- JCPS is taking the challenge of prevention and early intervention in different schoolrelated arenas, including students experiencing emotional and behavioral difficulties.
- JCPS has developed a safety net strategy that focuses on creating and enhancing positive environmental contexts that reinforces positive behavior in the school.
- POP deploys home-school coordinators to elementary schools to facilitate student success in the regular classroom environment.
- The program includes two intervention specialists and twelve home-school coordinators with an average caseload of approximately six-eight students.
- An Individual Success Plan (ISP) for each student focuses on positive classroom, school, family, and community supports and activities.
- Positive intervention strategies include one-to-one attention, mentoring, prosocial/self-control skills, counseling, contracts, incentive plans, and a team approach that involves increased family and community supports.

Program Goals and Objectives

POP's main goal is to help elementary school children function successfully in the least restrictive and most appropriate educational environment available. By providing or arranging a variety of school- and other outreach-based services, POP strives to accomplish the following objectives:

- Improvement in student behavior
- Improvement in student achievement
- Increased parent/guardian involvement in their child's education

Evaluation Research Questions

- 1. What are the characteristics of the POP scope of services?
- 2. Is POP serving at-risk elementary students who are disruptive and engage in severe or frequent emotional outburst?
- 3. Are students participating in the program showing improvement on measures such as school attendance, discipline, and ECE referrals?

Evaluation Design:

Pretest-Posttest Design (Reflexive Control Group)



Analysis and Reporting Procedures

- Data sources included mainly non-cognitive (i.e., attendance, behavior) student data.
- Project staff maintained a student file, with identifying/background information. success plans and daily contact notes.
- Statistical analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics.
- Program findings disseminated to stakeholders in our District.

Evaluation Findings

- POP intervention approach focuses on creating and enhancing positive skills, relationships, and environmental contexts, all that, promote positive behaviors and success in schools.
- 100% of the participants had a team meeting where an Individual Success Plan (ISP) was developed
- The program received over 184 student referrals from elementary principals to the elementary school liaisons.
- A total of 62 elementary schools have utilized POP services this year.
- The program served 46 Kindergarten, 33 first graders, 43 second graders, 24 third graders, 23 fourth graders, and 15 fifth graders.
- The program served mostly free/reduced lunch, primary students, with an overrepresentation of African American and male elementary students in JCPS.
- More than 50% of POP students had a history of suspensions.
- Attendance percent rate of a representative, randomly selected sample, increased from 92.00 to 92.48
- Teacher-based behavior ratings decreased positively and at a statistically significant level from 2.2 to 1.3

Evaluation Recommendations

- Perform analysis on more discipline- and academic-related data such as referrals, suspensions, letter grades or scores on standardized testing. Standardized test scores data from the Kentucky Department of Education will be available to our District until the end of 2001.
- Teacher behavior rating scale from the Childrens Initiative (formerly the Primary Mental Health Project), a nationally standardized instrument, is recommended to be used on next year evaluation.
- Develop a strong articulation of the POP program with the middle school program entitled Behavioral Coaches to provide a more systemic approach for addressing the problem of student behavior.



Positive Outreach Program

Introduction

Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) is the 26th largest school district in the United States. The school district serves more than 96,000 students from preschool to grade 12. JCPS has a vision for long-term student achievement. The vision entitled "Beyond 2000" was designed to assure that every student will acquire the fundamental academic and life skills necessary for success in the classroom and workplace. JCPS vision commits the school system to educate each student to the highest academic standards while ensuring attention to non-cognitive measures such as attendance and discipline.

In JCPS, the idea of prevention is a key element of the safety net strategies. The district has been moving from a short-term, secondary school, individual-focused interventions in the school classroom to a long-term, elementary school, comprehensive interventions expanding beyond the school to include the families and the community. Prevention strategies and programs are based on research and a concerted effort is made to identify the underlying risk factors for problems. The challenge that JCPS is trying to address is the implementation of prevention strategies that strengthen protective factors in the schools, families, and communities. The concept is that, to be successful, prevention interventions must focus on enhancing and creating positive environmental contexts in the schools, families, and communities that, in turn, reinforce positive behaviors. JCPS will facilitate the achievement of the attributes of social competence, problem solving skills, autonomy, and sense of purpose in all children.



Program Description

The Positive Outreach Program (POP), which began in 1993-94, has provided assistance to elementary schools in helping students overcome emotional, behavioral, or social problems and be successful in school. A staff consisting of a POP Coordinator, an Assessment/Intervention Specialist and eight Home-School Coordinators, has provided a variety of school, home and community-based interventions, services and supports to assist elementary school children. The goal of POP has been to improve student behavior and achievement, reduce the number of EBD (Emotional and Behavior Disorder) referrals and placement in Exceptional Child Education (ECE), and increase parent involvement in schools. The major focus of POP efforts has been to provide timely assessment, intervention and home-school coordination assistance for identified students who may benefit from POP services.

Student Selection Criteria

The target population agreed upon were elementary students who were disruptive and engaged in severe or frequent emotional outbursts or aggression, but which did not constitute a referral for special education testing. The principal of the elementary school referred the student to the POP Coordinator (Elementary Liaison) who completed the POP referral and if an appropriate referral, turned it over to the Assessment/Intervention Specialist. The specialist contacted the school, parent/guardian and student to begin assessment and development of the Individual Success Plan (ISP).



Program Activities

With assistance from POP personnel, school staffs were able to concentrate on team building. The POP staff brought together school personnel, such as teachers, principals, counselors, and resource center employees, to work with community service providers and students¹ families to create a plan to help each troubled student succeed. POP provided assessment of student needs regarding behavior concerns, development of an Individual Success Plan for each student, Home--School Coordinator services and supports, rapid response intervention for same day assistance, and follow-up contact and support for all students served. One off-site unit was provided for students with continuing needs. All students received monitoring and were tracked on attendance, suspensions, special placement and other performance indicators.

Evaluation Objectives and Questions

The evaluation objectives are to conduct a process evaluation and an outcome evaluation of the program. Process evaluation will help to understand the program dynamics and to provide timely quality assurance guidance to the program. Outcome evaluation will help to assess the impact of the program on participants. Attention will be focused on methods to document the evolution of the program from its inception through completion. The overarching evaluation questions that will guide the study are the following:

- 1. What are the characteristics and number of the students participating in the program?
- 2. Are there differences in participating students in non-academic measures such as attendance?
- 3. What are the students' changes in a behavior rating scale due to the program?



Evaluation Model

The Management-Oriented Evaluation Approach

Daniel Stufflebeam (1983; Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 1985) is one of the most reputed leaders on the management-oriented approach. According to Stufflebeam, the evaluation is a process of delineating, obtaining, and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives. The Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) Evaluation has different objectives, methods, and relation to decision making in the change process depending on the type of evaluation emphasis. The JCPS education leaders have to satisfy their informational needs to make decisions.

The management-oriented rationale is that the evaluative information is an essential part of good decision-making and that the evaluator can be most effective by serving administrators, policy makers, boards, practitioners, and others who need good evaluative information (Worthen et al., 1997, p. 97).

The UCLA Evaluation Model will be present in the evaluation reporting. The reason is that, although recommendations will be given, the evaluator only "illuminates" the situation with valuable and timely evaluation information to the decision makers. Klein, Fenstermacher, and Alkin (1971) argue that is not the evaluator role to make final decisions on a program. Alkin (1991) stated that evaluation is a process of gathering information, the information collected in an evaluation will be use mainly to make decisions about alternative courses of action, and different kinds of decisions require different kinds of evaluation procedures.



Method

Participants

Two characteristics of the sampling procedures are important when conducting inferential statistical analysis: (a) randomness and (b) representativeness. In this evaluation, a random number of students participating in the POP program were selected (N = 19). Approximately 68% of the randomly selected sample was distributed in different elementary schools to ensure the key characteristic of representativeness of the sample. Except for three schools that had two students (Bloom, Dunn, and Laukhuf Elementary), each student came from a different elementary school in the district. A complete list of the schools represented in this analysis is presented below:

- Auburndale Elementary
- Bloom Elementary
- Blue Lick Elementary
- Breckinridge-Franklin Elementary
- Coleridge-Taylor Elementary
- **Dunn Elementary**
- Gutermuth Elementary
- Hawthorne Elementary
- Jacob Elementary
- Kenwood Elementary
- Laukhuf Elementary
- Luhr Elementary
- Okolona Elementary
- Sanders Elementary
- Wilkerson Elementary
- Wilt Elementary



As displayed on Table 1, the randomly selected participants were in the program for approximately six months. On average, the students were more than seven years old, six out of ten were Black, mostly males, and, by large, on free/reduced lunch status.

Table 1 Profile of the Students Participating in the POP Program (N = 19)

<u>Variable</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Median</u>	Frequencies	Percentages
					<u>-</u>
Months in Program	5.33	1.41	6		
Age in years	7.26	2.13	6		
Race					
Black				11	58%
White				8	42%
Gender					
Female				5	26%
Male				14	74%
Lunch Status					
Free/Reduced				16	84%
Pay				3	16%
					٠

Note: Students were randomly selected. Only one student originally included in the school year 2000-2001 did not participate in the analysis since no data was available in the baseline year (i.e., school year 1999-2000).



Data Collection

The data collected was essentially focusing on non-academic measures. The non-academic measures include attendance and discipline data. The information was collected at the beginning, during, and at the end of the program implementation.

The project coordinator and the evaluator used different data sources to obtain the information. First, the computerized database of the District provided individual student data, including identification number, race, gender, attendance, and behavioral related measurements. Second, a program activity log was kept to have all the services documented. All the staff providing the services had to fulfill the requirement of having a complete file for all the participating students.

Teachers provided reports about aggressive/disruptive behaviors of project participants on a weekly basis. A teacher-based behavior rating checklist was developed for the purpose of assessing the impact of the program on a pre- and posttest context. Finally, the project coordinator collected "success stories" to share with the school staff and parents.

Data Analysis

The project coordinator works with the program evaluator to collect, analyze, and disseminate the information on program operations and outcomes. The evaluation design is pre- and post-measurement using reflexive controls (Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999). The data analysis will include descriptive statistics (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996) and dependent-sample t-test (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 1994).



Results

Process Evaluation

• What are the characteristics of the POP scope of services?

The Positive Outreach Program (POP) was available to assist elementary school children who exhibited emotional, behavioral and social problems that limited their ability to succeed in the regular school environment. POP provided a variety of school, home and community-based interventions, services and supports on a transitional basis, typically for about 3 months. POP established an ongoing 'support team' that included parent/guardian(s), school faculty and other involved parties who together develop and implement an Individual Success Plan (ISP) for the student.

POP provided or arranged services and supports in order to address student needs by means of (a) assessment of student needs regarding emotional, behavioral and social concerns; (b) development of an ISP for each student; (c) Home-School Coordinator intervention services and supports: (d) rapid response intervention for same day assistance; (e) follow-up contact and support provided for all students served; and, (f) professional development activities to enhance school capacity to meet needs of all elementary students.

As a 'bridge builder,' the Home-School Coordinator (HSC) developed a close relationship with the student, school staff, parent/guardian(s) and other involved parties. The HSC worked with the student, school and family on an outreach basis to identify needs, develop and implement intervention strategies, provide support and monitor progress. The HSC served as a transitional mentor and support person for the student with whom they maintained routine contact during the course of POP participation. The



HSC focused on building a relationship with the student to foster pro-social skills, self-control and positive interactions with peers and adults at school. HSC was also responsible for convening initial service and after-care planning meetings to ensure a 'team approach' to student success is maintained.

Elementary student who exhibit emotional, behavioral and social problems often require immediate intervention which may not be easily managed within existing school resources. POP provided a "rapid response" service to help schools assist such students in times of great need. A referral to the Elementary Liaison's office quickly mobilized the support of a Home School Coordinator on-site at the elementary school location within 30 min. to 1 hour. The HSC provided necessary assistance, including direct intervention, family contact and access to other school/community resources. Rapid Response assistance does not necessarily result in ongoing HSC services, although a referral to POP may be made for continued behavior concerns.

POP was designed to provide intensive and transitional services for elementary school students in cooperation with school staff, family members and other concerned parties. Intervention services are intended to continue until student behavior markedly improves and/or other ongoing school and community-based supports can be mobilized. Intensive home school coordination services are not anticipated to be provided for greater than 12 weeks. At least one week prior to completion of POP services, an after care plan was developed in cooperation with involved parties, with follow-up provided to all POP participants over the course of the year.



Outcome Evaluation

• Are there differences in participating students in non-academic measures?

Attendance, a non-academic measure, was analyzed in this program evaluation to assess the impact of the program. As previously presented in participants' section of this report, the time frame for the analysis was a six-month period since the intervention lasted the same amount of time.

First, basic descriptive statistics were performed. As shown in Table 2, when compared against themselves, the students showed a higher average attendance percent in the treatment year than last year's average attendance percent. Second, to examine statistically significant differences, a paired-sample t-test was conducted to assess the difference in attendance percent rate in the baseline year (1999-2000) and the treatment year (2000-2001). As presented in Table 2, the gain from past year school year did not reach statistically significant levels. Figure 1 shows the graphical representation.

Table 2

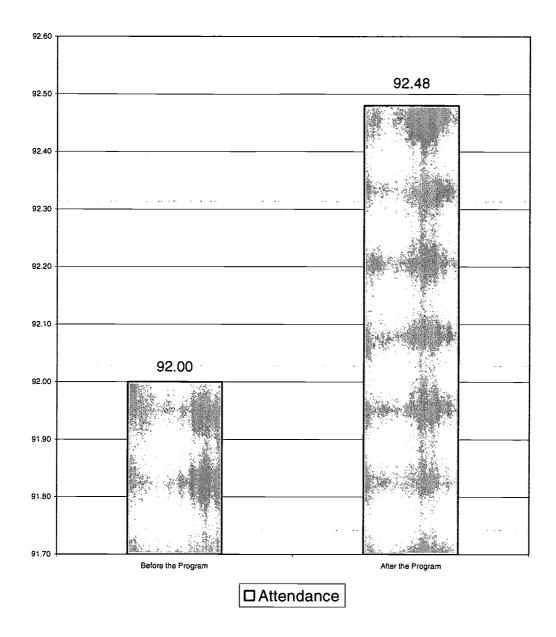
Comparison of Baseline and After-Treatment in Non-Academic Measures of Students

Participating in the Program (N = 19)

Year	Mean	<u>SD</u>	Range	t-value
Baseline Year (1999-2000)	92.00	8.28	70.95-100	0.569
Treatment Year (2000-2001)	92.48	4.80	83.33-100	



Figure 1 POP Impact on Attendance





• Are there differences in participating students in behavior ratings?

The participating students were assessed using the Behavior Rating Checklist.

The areas included are: (a) academic (reading, math, writing, language, other); (b) work skills (work completion, work quality, work consistency, organization, other); (c) thinking skills (cognitive ability, problem solving, memory, other); and, (d) behavior/emotions (follow directions, distractible/off task, anxious, depressed, focus of attention, impulsive, rule compliance, verbal aggression, physical aggression, overactive, inappropriate talk, interaction with other, other).

A teacher-based behavior rating checklist was used for the purpose of assessing the impact of the program (3 = major concern, 2 = moderate concern, 1 = mild concern, 0 = no concern). Special attention was given to the behavior/emotion subsection in the statistical analysis. Basic descriptive statistics was the initial statistical analysis performed. As shown in Table 3, when compared against themselves, the students showed a positive decrease in the ratings on the behavior checklist ($\underline{M} = 2.2$ to $\underline{M} = 1.3$). Overall, the students moved from "moderate concern" to "mild concern." See the Appendix A related to the School Behavior Ratings, specifically the subsection related to the behavior/emotions.

In addition, to examine statistically significant differences, a paired-sample t-test was conducted to assess the difference in ratings at the time of entry in the program and at the time of exit of the treatment. As presented in Table 3, the changes from the time of entry in the program when compared to the time of exit did reach statistically significant levels at the .001 alpha level. Figure 2 displays a graphical representation of the impact in students' behavior, based on the perceptions of the teachers.



Table 3

<u>Comparison of Entry and After-Treatment Behavior Measures of Students Participating</u>

<u>in the Program</u>

Variable	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Median</u>	Mode	SD	Range	t-test
Pretest	2.21	2.30	2.0	.54	1-3	4.81*
Posttest	1.34	1.42	.00	.81	0-3	

^{*} p < .001

Qualitative Data Concerning Student Changes in Behaviors

In order to have a better understanding of the complexity of work involved in the POP program, a couple of notes given by the teachers might be illustrative:



[&]quot;Due to his inability to focus, he misses out on critical instruction in reading"

[&]quot;Cannot stay on task and difficulty staying focused"

[&]quot;She has a hard time following directions. She gets upset easily."

[&]quot;Can be easily distracted by others."

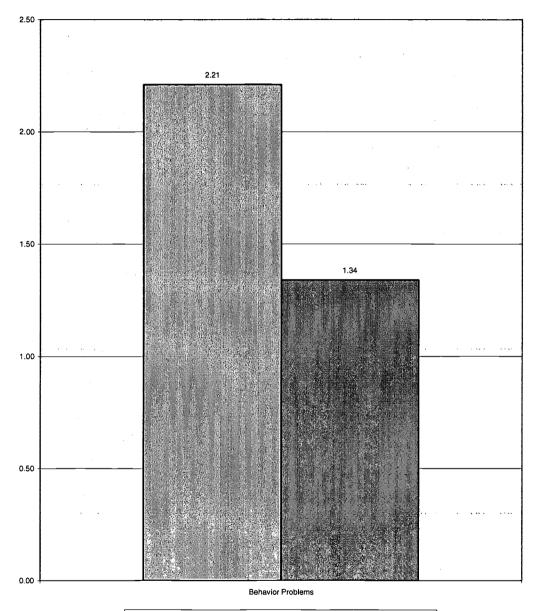
[&]quot;When angry has a very difficult time following rules."

[&]quot;Hits, kicks, and scratches teacher when upset."

[&]quot;Unpredictable behavior."

[&]quot;Out of control often."

Figure 2
POP Impact on Behavior







Impact of the Program in Suspensions and ECE Referrals

A sample of 75 POP participants was analyzed in terms of suspensions. A total of 48 POP students had a suspension record. From the 48 POP students, about 27 were suspended for three times, four suspended two times, and the remaining number had only one suspension. A total of 23 from the original group of 48 students had a history of suspension in our District. In general, the suspensions were related to disruptive behavior and disrespect to the teacher, principal, and security guard. The suspensions were mostly distributed in the category 14 (i.e., stabbing another student with pencil, biting, kicking, hitting, turning over office furniture, refusal to cooperate) and 21 (i.e., assault to another student, hitting teacher, throwing chairs at teacher and students, striking adults, intending to cause physical injury, kicking another student).

The referral to special education services is a measure of success of the POP program. In fact, an important goal of this program is to reduce the number of referrals to special education services. A sample of 75 POP students was analyzed in terms of referrals to Exceptional Child Education (ECE) services. Only nine of the total numbers of students in the sample were referred for ECE services. This represents only a 12 percent of the total sample under study.



Discussion

The POP program is improving the percent of attendance in the participating students. The program is also decreasing the behavioral concerns as perceived by the teachers of the participating students. As result of this exploratory study of POP, it can be concluded that the program has provided assistance to elementary schools in helping students overcome emotional, behavioral, or social problems and be successful in school. A staff consisting of a POP Coordinator, an Assessment/Intervention Specialist and eight Home-School Coordinators, has provided a variety of school, home and community-based interventions and services to achieve the goal of improving student behavior.

A significant body of research indicates that over time a number of economic, demographic, social, and physical risks can harm children's development, contributing to problem behaviors, failure in school, and poor mental health (Cole and Cole, 1993). Such risks may include (a) low socioeconomic status, (b) overcrowding or large family size, (c) low maternal education, (d) limited employment skills by the head of the household, and, (e) welfare status (Garmezy, 1993). While many children surmount individual risk factors, children who endure several risks simultaneously are more likely to develop serious problems (Garmezy 1993). Research suggests that, for children who are exposed to risk factors, negative effects can be reduced by altering children's exposure to risks or by changing their perceptions of risks and helping them develop coping strategies (Smith and Carlson, 1997).

There are also certain protective factors that may strengthen children's resiliency and help them cope with socio-demographic risks. These could include personal characteristics, such as temperament, disposition, and behavioral and cognitive skills, as



well as environmental characteristics, such as social support from the community, parental warmth, adult monitoring and supervision, and positive role models (Coie et al., 1993).

Further research needs to address other issues to make more conclusive decisions about the effectiveness of the program. This will include the development of clearer eligibility criteria; furthermore, on the basis of the aforementioned eligibility criteria, establish a comparison group. Although difficult to achieve due to the nature of the program, the comparison group will certificate the POP program. The evaluation research design will be stronger and will address some of the multiple threats to internal validity that are present in this study. In addition to the aforementioned need of a comparison group, the program administrators need to include more discipline related data such as referrals to the office and in-school suspensions. In order to fulfill the data needs it is recommended to provide additional administrative assistance regarding more thorough baseline and follow up data collection in this program.



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Appendix A

Teacher-Based Behavior Rating Checklist



Jefferson County Public Schools Positive Outreach Program

School Behavior Ratings

Student Name:			_ Grade:	Race:	Gender:
M or F					
School Name:				Referral to P.C	.P. Date:
Please rate this student's age/gender peers. Compleside if needed.					
Ratings: 3 = Major C S = Strength		Moderate Concern appropriate areas)	1 = Mild C	oncern	0 = No Concern
Area	Rating	Describe Specific	c Behaviors f	or Concern rati	ngs 1, 2, or 3.
Academic Reading Math Writing Language Other (specify)					
Work Skills Work Completion Work Quality Work Consistency Organization Other (specify)					
Thinking Skills Cognitive Ability Problem Solving Memory Other (specify)					
Behavior/Emotions Follows Directions Distractible/off task Anxious Depressed Focus of Attention Impulsive Rule Compliance Verbal Aggression Physical Aggression Overactive Inappropriate Talk Interaction w/ Other Other (specify)					
Completed by			sition		——————————————————————————————————————



Appendix B

Permission Form



Jefferson County Public Schools Positive Outreach Program

Participation/Permission Form

Student Name:	School:	Date of Birth:
assist his/her behavior and achi my child's needs and the provis Services may include, but are n	evement at school. I realize this parsion of appropriate services at school	Outreach Program (POP) in order to rticipation will include an assessment of ol, home or other community settings. nentoring, parent/teacher support, proment activities.
By signing below, I gi of an individualized POP Succe		my child's needs and the development
I also give permission arrange and provide services to	for my child to be assigned a POP leassist with his/her needs.	Home School Coordinator who will
	for my child to be transported by the home or other activities and services	e POP Home School Coordinator or es in the community.
	will strive to maintain the safety of students present an immediate dang	all students, which may call for the use er to themselves or others.
organizations that may be of as child's school, Family Resource	e Centers and other JCPS locations,	my child. These include staff at my
success. Therefore, I agree to p	my active involvement in my child's participate as necessary in the assess Plan, and services which call for my to succeed at school.	ment of my child's needs, the
Any and all agreement revoked at any time at my writt		d by this form is voluntary and may be
Parent/Guardian Signature	Da	te
JCPS Witness Signature		2



Appendix C

Student Information Form



Jefferson County Public Schools Positive Outreach Program

Student Information Sheet

Student Name:	Grade:	_ DOB:	Race:	
Gender: M or F				
School Name:	Reside School (if different):			
		Position:		
Phone:				
School Contact:	Position:		Phone:	
School Contact:Parent/Guardian:	Phone: (H)		(W)	
Parent/Guardian:	Phone: (H)		(W)	
Home Address:			ZIP:	
Emergency Contact:		Relation:		
Student Lives With:				
Classroom Teacher:	Counse	elor:		
Other Contacts:	Relation/Agency:	_	Phone:	
Reason(s) for POP Referral: (note concer	rns related to behavior, discip	line, attenda	ance, achievement, etc.)	
History of Discipline Referrals, Bus Refe	errals and Suspensions: (note	number, nat	ure, dates if app.)	
Behavior Management Plan/Intervention date)	s: (note any written plan, inte	rventions, d	uration and results to	
Related Student/Family Issues/History: (Family Court/Dependency: sanegMedical/Physical Health:familyMental Health:familystudenAlcohol/Other Drug family hx:	g:student:nt:			
Domestic Violence:				
Grief/Loss or Other Child Trauma:				
Other Issues/Concerns:				
Student Strengths/Assets/Interests:				
Preliminary Service Needs:				
POP Staff Signature			Date	



Appendix D

Student Success Plan



Jefferson County Public Schools Positive Outreach Program

Student Success Plan

Student Name:	Grade:	DOB:	Race:
Gender: M or F			
School Name:		P.O.P. Er	rollment
Date:			
Note specific interventions, resources and c Include referrals for any additional assessn			
P.O.P. Interventions/Resource	es:		
Classroom/School Intervention	ons/Resources•		
Classi com sencoi interventi	ons/resources		
	-	_	
	•		
Parent/Guardian/Family Inte	ervention/Resourc	es:	
<u> </u>			
Other JCPS/Community Inte	erventions/Resour	·ces:	
			_
			-
POP Staff Signature			





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